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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how to motivate unsuccessful English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learners in Japanese high schools. The first section examines the current status of teaching ESL to Japanese high school students. The second section focuses on how to motivate unsuccessful ESL learners (employing motivational strategies, creating a comfortable atmosphere, building students' confidence, making students more responsible for their learning, making the materials relevant to the students, teaching students learning strategies, and promoting cooperative learning). The third section offers practical suggestions for classroom application (applying learning styles theory, applying task-based learning, sample task-based learning lesson plan, and using first and second languages in instruction). The paper concludes that the best way to motivate unsuccessful ESL students is to use a variety of motivational strategies, incorporate these strategies into communication activities, and take students' learning styles into consideration. (Contains 18 references.) (SM)

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Improving the Motivation of Unsuccessful Learners in the Japanese High School EFL Context

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Introduction

"Nothing succeeds like success." In other words, when a learner stays on the right track in learning English, the learner knows how to study it and in the meantime he/she will improve his/her skills greatly. Language teachers, including me, are happy to see these kinds of students in the classroom.

On the contrary, it is difficult for teachers to find students less motivated to learn English after his/her uncomfortable experiences. In the long run, the results would be learning little English and the learner would keep in his/her negative feeling about English. Unfortunately, I myself saw the latter students a lot.

However, in recent years a lot of research on the good language learner shows effective strategies, such as acquiring learning strategies and motivational strategies. By focusing on strategies of good learners, as described by Gefen (1981), teachers can tell what strategies unsuccessful learners do not employ. Thus, without doubt, research on good learners will help improve the proficiency of speakers and motivation of learning English.

This paper illustrates the reasons and ways to motivate unsuccessful learners in the Japanese high school EFL context. In Chapter I , the present teaching situation in the Japanese high school context, especially in terms of unsuccessful learners, is described. Next, in Chapter II , several useful strategies and techniques for motivating unsuccessful learners are the focus. In Chapter III , four practical suggestions for classroom applications: (A) applying learning styles theory, (B) applying task-based learning (TBL), (C) sample task-based learning (TBL) lesson plan, into which learning styles theory and learning strategies are incorporated, and (D) the use of first language (L1) and second language (L2) in instruction are described.

I . The Present English Teaching Situation of Senior High Schools in Japan: Successful and Unsuccessful Learners

In the new Course of Study for upper secondary schools (senior high schools), to be implemented by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in April 2003, foreign languages have become compulsory subjects and practical communicative abilities are being emphasized further. In other words, the importance of English as an " international language" has been recognized more and more.

However, there are problems with implementing this new approach because the class size of students is generally 40 and this still causes a difficult situation for communicative classes of English, as they tend to be teacher-centered. In terms of the diversity of students, in general, there are two major types of students: those who are college-bound and those, such as some of the vocational high school students, who will get a job after school.

Generally speaking, there are also two other types of students, "unsuccessful learners" and "successful learners" of English. "...Unsuccessful learners are", as described by Millrood (2001), "painful sufferers, doomed to bear the brunt of humiliation, excessive demands, unbearable stress, and the role of being 'losers'" (p.405). "The 'less-able' [unsuccessful learners] by definition are", as stated by Gefen (1981), "still capable of learning, but they have difficulties and all too often fail; they give up easily and soon become disillusioned"(p.110). It is difficult to define what makes a learner unsuccessful; however, they are the learners who learned little English after three or more years of studying it. Through my experience as a teacher, I have found that each group of students has some distinct characteristics. For example, by and large, unsuccessful learners of English have no specific goals, low motivation, low confidence, lower academic skills, low achievement and poor classroom behaviors such as paying less attention to their teachers, talking to other students, being too quiet, and being generally off task. Many teachers, including me, have some problems in teaching those students.

On the contrary, successful learners of English have specific goals; for example, some of them study English hard to be eligible for a competitive university, and have high motivation, high confidence, higher academic skills, high achievement, and exhibit good classroom behaviors such as paying close attention to teachers, doing homework, coming prepared and so on.

Obviously, it is easier to help the latter students stay on the right track of learning English. "It is the unsuccessful learners", as described by Millrood (2001), "who really need us to turn our efforts on to them"(p.405). Also, I consider more efforts are required for Japanese teachers of English to improve the proficiency of unsuccessful learners of English in order to meet the goal of the new Course of Study stated earlier.

Finally, as Rubin (1975) asserts, "Good language learning is said to depend on at least three variables: aptitude, motivation, and opportunity"(p.42). Then, what kind of efforts should teachers make to have them successful learners? These efforts should be directed at controllable attributes such as motivation, and learning strategies. The next chapter explains how teachers can help motivate unsuccessful learners of English in the Japanese EFL context.

II. Motivating Unsuccessful Learners of English in the Classroom

This chapter discusses some useful techniques and strategies, which are considered important for motivating unsuccessful learners in the Japanese high school EFL context.

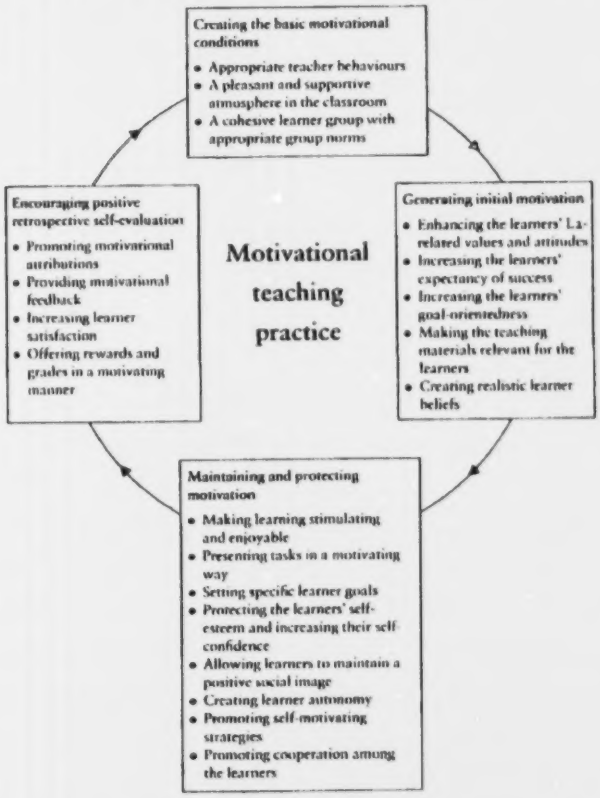
A. Employing Motivational Strategies

Not only learners of English but also all learners of a particular subject probably have experienced a decrease or loss of interest in learning a subject or language, because of someone's comments. For instance, John lost his interest in learning Japanese after having been criticized heavily in class by his friend. On the contrary, a learner may have been motivated by someone's encouragement. For instance, Emily began to study French hard after having been praised by her teacher. Interestingly, people are motivated even by one word. In fact, as Scarcella & Oxford (1992) assert, "Unquestionably, motivation and attitude are very important in language learning success" (p.53).

In order to motivate unsuccessful learners and to make them successful learners, teachers need to acquire more techniques and strategies than now. According to the explanation of the motivational strategies by Dörnyei (2001), "Motivational strategies refer to those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect" (p.28). Dörnyei's

Motivational Teaching Practice Model (see Figure 1) is process-oriented and it consists of four motivational units: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. Each of these four aspects includes several components, which consist of a few motivational strategies.

Figure1 (The Components of Motivational Teaching Practice in the L2 Classroom)


Creating the basic motivational conditions
• Appropriate teacher behaviours
• A pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom
• A cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms
Generating initial motivation
• Enhancing the learners' L2-related values and attitudes
• Increasing the learners' expectancy of success
• Increasing the learners' goal-orientedness
• Making the teaching materials relevant for the learners
• Creating realistic learner beliefs
Maintaining and protecting motivation
• Making learning stimulating and enjoyable
• Presenting tasks in a motivating way
• Setting specific learner goals
• Protecting the learners' self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence
• Allowing learners to maintain a positive social image
• Creating learner autonomy
• Promoting self-motivating strategies
• Promoting cooperation among the learners
Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation
• Promoting motivational attributions
• Providing motivational feedback
• Increasing learner satisfaction
• Offering rewards and grades in a motivating manner
Motivational teaching practice

(From the *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* by Z. Dörnyei, 2001, p.29)

In this chapter, I discuss some particularly important strategies for unsuccessful learners to learn English effectively in the Japanese high school EFL context. In other words, there are some strategies which should be emphasized more (see Table 1).

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Table 1

Motivational Strategies

PROCESS	MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES
CREATING THE BASIC MOTIVATIONAL CONDITIONS	Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom.
GENERATING INITIAL MOTIVATION	Promote the learners' language-related values by presenting peer role models.
	Make the curriculum and the teaching materials relevant to the students
MAINTAINING AND PROTECTING MOTIVATION	Make learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by increasing the attractiveness of the tasks.
	Provide learners with regular experiences of success.
	Build your learners' confidence by providing regular encouragement.
	Build your learners' confidence in their learning abilities by teaching them various learner strategies.
	Increase student motivation by actively promoting learner autonomy.
ENCOURAGING POSITIVE SELF-EVALUATION	Use grades in a motivating manner, reducing as much as possible their demotivating impact.

(Adapted from the *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* by Z. Dörnyei, 2001, pp.137-144)

B. Creating a Comfortable Atmosphere

One of those strategies that is not practiced as often is creating a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, which is in the first aspect of the components above (See Table 1). Although, basically,

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Japanese teachers seem to be familiar with the techniques, strategies and the importance of having good relationships with students or parents; in terms of English classes more motivational strategies stated in II .A need to be adapted to the classroom. As mentioned earlier, English classes still tend to be teacher-centered, and those who cannot keep up with classes are prone to behaving poorly, such as paying less attention to teachers, talking to other students, being too quiet and so on. In order to change this situation and to get the unsuccessful learners more involved in class, changing the classroom atmosphere is considered indispensable. For example, as Dörnyei (2001) argues, students often feel embarrassed in language classes because teachers force them to speak well in front of other classmates with their limited vocabulary words. Then, what kind of motivational strategies can help to change this situation and facilitate activities? To do this, teachers need to have students understand that mistakes are all right. As Harmer (1999) asserts, "when second language learners make errors, they are demonstrating part of the natural process of language learning" (p.100). In addition, as Doyon (2000) argues that explicit error correction tends to make students feel they are criticized, and that instead teachers should correct errors in indirect ways. For instance, if a student says, "I watch T.V. yesterday", instead of pointing out the mistake, a teacher can say a correct sentence, " You watched T.V. yesterday", in a non-threatening way.

Moreover, Dörnyei (2001) goes on to argue, "...in a safe and supportive classroom...students feel comfortable taking risks because they know that they will not be embarrassed or criticized if they make a mistake" (p.41).

The next section illustrates the strategies that could be employed in a Japanese senior high school classroom to build students' confidence.

C. Building Students' Confidence

Another important factor in motivating unsuccessful learners is to build their confidence, which is in the third aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model (see Figure 1). They tend to have negative feelings such as," I'm not good at English" or "I don't have abilities to learn English", and so on. In other words, they tend to have no confidence in learning English. Not surprisingly, these

feelings lead to a downward spiral of unsuccessful learning. As Brown (2001) mentions, "Self-Confidence: Another way of phrasing this one is the 'I can do it!' Principle, or the Self-Esteem Principle. At the heart of all learning is a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish the task"(p.62).

Then, how to build students' confidence? One crucial way to do this is to reduce students' anxiety in the classroom. As Oxford (1990) argues, "A certain amount anxiety sometimes helps learners to reach their peak performance levels, but too much anxiety blocks language learning. Harmful anxiety presents itself in many guises: worry, self-doubt, frustration, helplessness, insecurity, fear, and physical symptoms" (p.142). As Scarcella & Oxford (1992) suggest, using pair work, group work, or cooperative learning activities [student-centered learning], help in not putting too much pressure on individual students in front of the whole class (see Chapter II .G). These activities are especially important because English classes in Japanese senior high schools still tend to be teacher-centered and students are liable to be quiet and passive.

Another salient point in reducing anxiety is about social comparison in the class. "Numbers talk;" this idea is often heard in high schools in Japan. In other words, the number of students who have entered competitive universities, or have been eligible for excellent companies, shows the status of the high schools. Currently, it is true that Japan has been a very competitive society. As for test scores in English classes, the average scores, and the highest and lowest scores tend to be announced publicly in class because "numbers talk". One way to change this situation is not having teachers and administrators focus on these "numbers" too much; specifically, on the lowest scores, in order to reduce anxiety. In fact, as Dörnyei (2001) asserts:

> Few things are more detrimental to one's self-esteem than the constant threat of social comparison hanging over one's head like a sword of Damocles. This involves an excessive emphasis on comparing successful and unsuccessful learners, and can be imposed in a variety of ways in the classroom, some more subtle than others: public pronouncement of grades (sometimes only the highest and lowest)...(p.92)

As Dörnyei indicated above, teachers need to be very careful about public announcements of test scores to build the confidence of students. Instead, teachers could praise and encourage students to change this

situation.

In addition, as Tim Murphy (2002) argued convincingly in his presentation at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., beliefs are "contagious" and optimistic beliefs cause better results. For example, if students have an optimistic belief such as, "I feel confident when I speak English", the classroom will be very active and interactive. Murphy argued further that when teachers/students believe making mistakes is wrong, the classroom is filled with fear or anxiety. On the contrary, if teachers/students have an optimistic belief, for example," I love mistakes", it reduces the anxiety of the students. Instead students have confidence and it leads to better results. In other words, by building positive beliefs among students, they can develop a sense of success and can get better achievement in the classroom. Murphy believes one way to promote these positive beliefs is, as seen in the second aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model (see Table 1), by using "Near Peer Role Models", which can be provided through the stories of past students, or inviting enthusiastic past students into the classroom and having them give advice about successful language learning to the class. In practical terms, one way to do this is for teachers to publish a newspaper about those students' successful stories of learning English to the class.

Finally, another crucial way to build confidence is by providing students with regular experiences with success, as indicated in the third aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model (see Table 1). "For the failing student, in particular", as described by Littlejohn (2001), "it is important that we [teachers] try to develop their sense of success and a feeling that they *can* do something, rather than a feeling that they can't"(p.4) (see Figure 2).

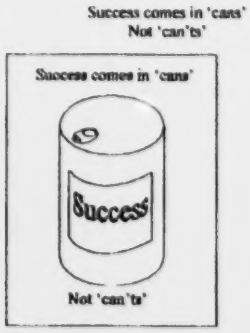

Figure 2

(From *Motivation-Where does it come from? Where does it go?* – by A. Littlejohn, 2001, p.4)

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He further argues, "...when we see students beginning to fail and beginning to lose motivation, one route to repairing the situation may lie in choosing tasks which we believe the students *can* do, in order to develop a sense of competence and confidence"(p.5). In other words, materials and tasks should be carefully chosen in order to match their proficiency level and interest (see Sample TBL Lesson Plan in Chapter Ⅲ).

D. Making Students More Responsible for their Learning

Another important element in motivating unsuccessful learners is building students' responsibility, or, in other words, creating learner autonomy, which is in the third aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model indicated in chapter Ⅱ.A (see Table 1). As mentioned earlier, in the Japanese high school EFL context, in general, classes are teacher-centered and unsuccessful students are particularly inclined to exhibit poor learning behaviors. In avoiding these situations, one of the most important strategies is helping students be responsible for their own learning. In other words, they don't just listen to teachers but get more involved in class.

Then, in what way can teachers involve unsuccessful learners? According to Oxford (1990), "When students take more responsibility, more learning occurs, and both teachers and learners feel more successful" (p.11). Kamada (1987) also explained, "In Japanese society and Japanese schools, independence is a skill, which cannot be taken for granted. Independence itself must be taught first as a learning strategy skill before students can learn how to become independent learners where they take responsibility for their own learning "(p.22). As Kamada states above, in terms of motivating unsuccessful learners, getting students to become "independent learners" will be a great help.

One way to help students become more independent and responsible is applying student-centered activities, such as those in task-based learning (TBL), in which students are assigned specific roles in the meaningful and purposeful context (see Sample TBL Lesson Plan in Chapter Ⅲ). Another way to help students be more responsible is to develop students' self-awareness by allowing them to do self-assessment of tasks during class activities. For example, after students have finished an activity, the teacher can have them check a simple self- or peer- assessment checklist (see Table 2), then, in the next

class the teacher can give a brief feedback to the students by writing comments on the sheet. As Brown & Hudson in Brown (2001) assert a lot of advantages to using self-assessment, such as increased speed, greater student involvement, increased independent learning, and higher motivation, have been identified in many research studies. These techniques would be crucial ways for teachers to employ in the classroom because of their effectiveness in making unsuccessful students responsible for their learning.

Moreover, another way to help students become more responsible is to allow learners choices. "If people are involved", as described by Littlejohn (2001),"in deciding what to do, they are usually more committed to it"(p.6). In addition, as Kamada asserts (1987) by providing students choices, in which they can choose by themselves, they will become more responsible. For instance, teachers can have students choose their assignments from project work, grammar exercises, reading chapters in a book and so on. Another example is using TBL, which includes students' decision-making in the task- cycle (see Sample TBL Lesson Plan in Chapter III).

Table 2

Sample Self-Assessment Checklist

Place a check mark in the appropriate box to describe your work.

Activity	So-so	Good	Very Good
Listening to teacher's directions			
Participating in discussions			
Working with members together			

E. Making the Materials Relevant to the Students

Another salient approach for motivating weaker learners is, as seen in the second aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model (see Figure 1), making the teaching materials relevant to the students; in other words, it is important to individualize and personalize learning. "... Teachers", as described by Cheung (2001), "should take note of their students' lives, and take their interests into account when designing and selecting teaching materials" (p.60). Then, in practical terms, what kind of

materials is relevant to upper secondary school students (15 to 18 years old)? One relevant material is considered to be "the use of popular culture", such as English language movies and pop songs (see Sample Activity below). Cheung explains further, "In the process of growing up, students need to identify with something, and a large proportion of them choose the popular culture, which being readily accessible everywhere, and highly acceptable to young people, acts as a bond between them, providing meanings that are relevant to their lives" (p.56). Another relevant one, for example, would be topics on sports, if most of the students in your class were highly involved with sports club activities (see Sample TBL Lesson Plan in Chapter Ⅲ).

Thus, secondary school students, as stated by Cheung (2001), make an effort by themselves to acquire the skill in whatever they are interested in. In other words, if students were attracted to the material, they would work on harder to acquire the skill.

Here is a sample of a task, in which popular culture is used.

SampleTask: (Using Popular Culture: Focus on Listening: Cartoon Movies, in which a dog is a main character)

Student Profiles:

(1) Level of students: high beginning (1st graders in the Japanese high school EFL context): 15,16 years old

(2) 40 monolingual

Procedure:

Step 1: (Pre-Listening Activity 1): (Brainstorming) Get SS to make pairs and to discuss American cartoons and Japanese cartoons, in which an animal is the main character. Next, have them fill out a T chart on the worksheet (#1)(see sample handout #1 below). Then, check the answers orally.

Step 2: (Pre- Listening Activity 2): Distribute to SS worksheet (#2)(see sample handout #2 below) and get SS to watch the video segment with no sound and check the answers.

(Continues)

Sample Handout #1

Japanese Cartoons	American Cartoons
(The main character is an animal)	(The main character is an animal)

Sample Handout #2

Watch the video carefully and place a check in appropriate boxes.	**YES**	**NO**
1. A man and a woman were talking at an airport.	☐	☐
2. A woman had many bags at an airport	☐	☐

F. Teaching Students Learning Strategies

Some motivational strategies were explained in the previous sections. This section illustrates the use of learning strategies to motivate and encourage unsuccessful learners of English. "Learning strategies", as Oxford, et al. (1993) explain, "are specific behaviors that students use to enhance their language learning" (p.36).

How to learn English? How can I speak English fluently? How can I read an English newspaper perfectly? These questions are all common questions that every learner of English has. Most teachers have been asked these questions. One teacher may have answered, "As listening is very important, try to watch video movies as often as possible," and another teacher may have said, "Practice reading aloud a model dialogue and remember useful expressions," and so on. Undoubtedly, learning how to learn is extremely important. As Oxford (1990) argues, learning strategies particularly enhance students' learning because they are active tools for increasing communicative abilities and they will result in students' higher achievement and greater confidence.

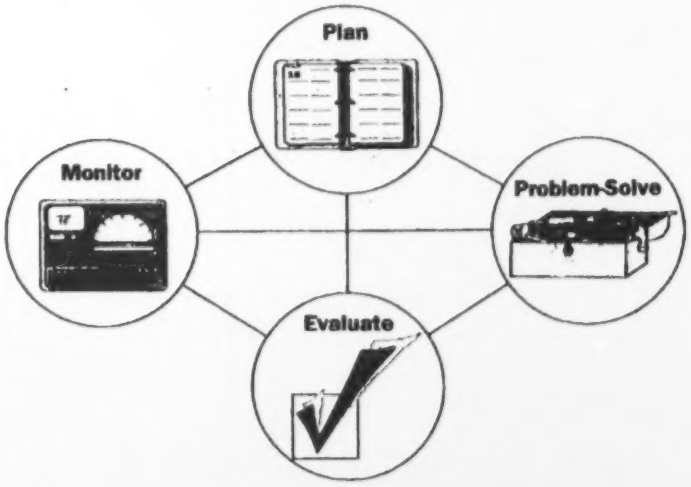
In fact, the usefulness of teaching learning strategies in boosting learners' motivation is indicated in the third aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practical Model (see Table 1 in Chapter II. A). Moreover, "one suggested way to find the solution [for how to teach unsuccessful learners], [is] as

Millrood (2001) states, "to study the strategies of 'good learners' and to direct the attention of unsuccessful learners to how the successful students arrive at their results" (p.405). In other words, teachers can help them be successful by explicitly teaching appropriate learning strategies.

Also, Chamot, et al. (1999) assert, "When teachers teach learning strategies, it is critical that they develop students' motivation to use the strategies" (p.176). Here is the Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning by Chamot, et al. (1999):

Figure 3

Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning



(from *the Learning Strategies Handbook* by Anna Uhl Chamot, et al. 1999)

The model consists of four metacognitive processes: planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating (see Figure 4). Every learner works through each process. Each process is comprised of several learning strategies. (For a more complete description of language learning strategies, see Chamot, et al, 1999.)

The following is an example of a task, in which students make introductions to the class on the first day of a new academic year in the Japanese high school EFL context. In this task, sample strategies for each phase can be found.

Example Language Learning Strategies

Procedure:

Step 1: The good learner may begin planning by thinking about his/her favorite things such as food, hobby, school subjects, movie stars, and so on and by listing on a sheet of paper. **(Activate Background Knowledge)**

Step 2: The learner continues planning what he/she will say in the self-introduction. **(Organizational Planning)**

Step 3: Then, in the monitoring process, he/she reads it to himself/herself first, to check if the content of the self- introduction will be clear and interesting to the audience. **(Ask If It Makes Sense)**

Step 4: In the problem-solving process, as the learner speaks, he/she might change the content of the speech. **(Substitute)**

Step 5: After the self-introduction is finished, the learner evaluates his/her performance by filling out a simple checklist. **(Evaluate Yourself)**

Although these processes are not always sequential, in this way, successful learners use all four processes and strategies in a task. As seen above, teachers could help motivate unsuccessful learners by directly teaching appropriate learning strategies (see Sample TBL Lesson Plan in Chapter III).

G. Promoting Cooperative Learning

First, as indicated in the third aspect of Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model (see Figure 1 in Chapter II .A), cooperative learning is a tremendous approach for improving motivation, especially for the weak learner. Many studies demonstrate the significance of cooperative learning among students. For instance, "In the language area, classroom cooperation", as described by Bejarano (in Scarcella & Oxford, 1992), "has the following additional advantages: stronger motivation, increased satisfaction for teachers and students, more language practice, more feedback about language errors, and greater use of varied language functions"(p.60). "The use of cooperative learning", as described by

Francois, et al. (1999), "with the teacher being primarily a facilitator instead of serving as the evaluating and controlling person was a vital component of each class" (p.41). Changing from the traditional Japanese teacher's role, a kind of an authority, to a facilitator will be challenging for teachers because it is a big change. However, in order to adapt and adjust to the classroom, teachers are required to obtain the skills and the techniques to successfully conduct cooperative learning.

One way to bring cooperative learning into the classroom is applying task-based learning (TBL), in which pair work and group work are often used (see Chapter III .B).

Another way to do this is to use peer-assessment. As mentioned in II .D, peer-assessment has many advantages, such as students' involvement, responsible learning, and higher motivation. In practical terms, teachers can do this by having students fill in peer-assessment questionnaires after activities. For example, they can do this after an oral presentation. Then, students can get his/her classmate's immediate feedback.

Next, one important thing to bear in mind, in terms of cooperative learning, is about mixed-ability classes, which are a somewhat controversial issue in the Japanese high school program because it is difficult to place students in classes. "A success-building context", as described by Millrood (2001), "can be created for teaching the whole class of mixed-ability individuals"(p.406). Furthermore, Millrood asserts, "... in cases of accommodating high and low achievers, successful learners can attain an equal share of success, while unsuccessful learners display an indisputable gain" (p.406). Although, in schools with college-bound students, classes tend to be divided according to the proficiency level of English, this research suggests that mixed- ability classes would work better than keeping classes of low achievers and high achievers separate.

Finally, taking gender differences into account in cooperative learning would also be important because in the Japanese high school EFL context sometimes 40 students are all boys or girls, especially in vocational high schools, such as business high schools, agricultural high schools, and technical high schools. As Oxford, et al. (1993) assert, many research studies show the big difference between males and females in learning a foreign language. Moreover, Ehrman & Oxford (in Oxford, et al.,1993) point out that females use far more strategies than males. One suggested way to balance these differences would be to simply mix males and females in the classroom, if possible. For instance, 15 boys and 25

girls, or 15 girls and 25 boys would enhance the classroom.

Ⅲ. Practical Suggestions for Classroom Application

In the previous chapter, several crucial motivational strategies for unsuccessful learners were the focus. This chapter illustrates several practical suggestions for classroom application in terms of employing motivational strategies. Among these are: (A) applying learning styles theory; (B) applying task-based learning (TBL); (C) sample task-based learning lesson plan, and (D) using the L1 and L2 as the instructional language.

A. Applying Learning Styles Theory

Applying learning styles theory to the classroom by including it in lesson planning or in raising student self-awareness, would work for motivating unsuccessful learners. This is because teachers' knowing the diversity of students helps them design effective and stimulating lessons for unsuccessful learners. As every teacher knows, he/she has never had the perfectly same class before because a class is comprised of different persons who have different learning styles. For example, Ichiro wants to learn English by speaking with native speakers and wants to go to Australia. Mari wants to study Spanish by reading novels and loves to write a journal. In other words, both students have different learning styles. "At least 20 different dimensions of learning styles", as Shipman, et al. (in Oxford et al, 1993), point out, "have been identified, ranging from reflective/impulsive to analytic/global to visual/auditory/hands-on" (p.34). (For a more detailed description, see Scarcella & Oxford, 1992.) For example, as Oxford, et al. (1993) assert, hands-on students like to move a lot and enjoy studying with concrete things, collages, and flashcards. It is not comfortable for them to sit at a desk for a long time. They like better to have shorter tasks and more breaks and move around the classroom. They frequently like Total Physical Response activities, active games and activities which include body movements in class. Personally, these activities are likely to match in my classroom. It is because, currently, most of my students, who are agricultural high school students, are hands-on learners.

Dunn, et al. (in Oxford, et al, 1993) also summarized, "eight experimental studies [the effects of learning style differences in math, science, and reading] in which greater achievement was found when students' perceptual preferences were matched with instructional resources" (p.34). Thus, applying this learning styles theory to learning can help enhance the materials for unsuccessful learners and facilitate activities in the classroom. As Kolb (in Hainer, et al. 1990) argues, "effective learning involves four phases: from getting involved (Concrete Experience) to listening/ observation (Reflective Observation) to creating an idea (Abstract Conceptualization) to making decisions (Active Experimentation)" (p.2). In fact, these ideas can be applied to designing lesson plans.

Here is an example application of these phases: a lesson, whose topic is the "Natural Disaster," in a Japanese high school EFL class. A teacher can teach as follows:

Sample Lesson Plan

Procedure:

Step 1: First, a teacher has students imagine words make them "feel" like they are in nature, such as sky, sea, water, river, earth, and so on. **(Learning from Feeling)**

Step 2: Then, in the next phase **(Learning by Watching and Listening)**, the teacher has students discuss in pairs what they felt and jot down these words.

Step 3: The teacher gives brief feedback and moves on to the next phase **(Learning by Thinking)**, and has the students read a chapter of the book. After they finish reading the chapter, the teacher gives out comprehension questions to them.

Step 4: Finally, in the last phase **(Learning by Doing)**, the teacher might have students research in the community in groups and report to the class later.

Although it is almost impossible to have the materials perfectly match for the class of 40 students, by balancing these four learning modes in designing the lesson plan would be a key for motivation unsuccessful learners.

Second, as for student self-awareness of learning styles, as Brown (2001) claims, "Successful second language learners are usually people who know how to manipulate style (as well as strategy)

levels in their day-to-day encounters with the language"(p.210). Also, as Brown (2001) suggests further, one useful way to inculcate in students awareness of successful styles is by having students fill in an informal self-checklist (see Table 3) and discussing it. In practical terms, teachers can give it to students at the beginning of a semester and discuss it with them. Here is an example Learning Styles Self-Checklist.

Table 3

Sample Learning Styles Self -Checklist

Place a check in the appropriate box next to the description

Description	**Much Like Me**	**Somewhat Like Me**	**Not Like Me**
I really like to work with my classmates in groups			
I don't care if classmates laugh at me when I speak in English.			
I want to learn English outside the classroom, too.			

(Adapted from Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy by H.Brown, 2001)

B. Applying Task-based Learning (TBL)

In the previous section, I described learning styles and their application to the class in the Japanese high school context. This section illustrates task-based learning (TBL). (For a more in-depth description of TBL, see Willis, 1996.) Although TBL is currently a popular instructional framework, it is not yet applied to the classroom so much in the Japanese high school EFL context. However, the application of TBL to the classroom can help motivate unsuccessful learners. Why? It is because TBL is an excellent instructional framework which includes a lot of advantages. Scarcella & Oxford (1992) argue that task-based learning involves communicative tasks in L2 and is an integrated-skill instructional framework. They assert further that research shows that TBL motivates students when the task is

relevant and interesting to them (see Chapter II .E). In addition, as Willis (1996) points out, "An important feature of TBL is that learners are free to choose whatever language forms they wish to convey what they mean, in order to fulfill, as well as they can, the task goals"(p.24). In other words, students can be responsible for learning by providing them choices (see Chapter II .D).

TBL includes the three basic stages: the Pre-task, the Task Cycle, and Language Focus. According to Harmer (1999), instead of a language structure, students are presented with a task they have to perform or a problem they have to solve (p.86). In addition, as mentioned earlier, the materials should be relevant to the students and have some connections with their lives. In short, the task should be carefully chosen, especially for unsuccessful learners (see Sample TBL Lesson Plan in Chapter III).

In practical terms, Willis (1996) indicates that, for beginners, the emphasis is on teacher's talk, the use of visual aids, and demonstrations in the Pre-task cycle. Next, the Task-cycle includes more sets of short tasks. For example, one task that would be relevant to the weak learner is "making a list of these categories: colors, sports, songs, movies"(Classifying), because it is simple and related to their interests. In this way teachers can offer appropriate tasks for them in a motivating way. A more extensive example of the TBL phases, into which learning strategies and learning styles theory are incorporated, can be found in the sample lesson plan in section C.

C. Sample Task-based Learning (TBL) Lesson Plan

1. Student Profiles:
   (1) Level of Students: Low Intermediate (2nd graders in the Japanese high school EFL context): 16,17 years old
   (2) 40 monolingual (Japanese)
2. Objectives of the Lesson
   (1) Improving students' reading skills **(Focus on Reading Skill)**
      a. Grasping the main idea (skimming)
      b. Getting specific information (scanning)
   (2) Getting SS to know in detail about the Major Leagues.

3. Materials **(Sports: Popular Culture)**

- Reading Material: " Babe Ruth" – HOME RUN HERO–

  by Keith Brandt illustrated by Hal Frenck (Troll Associates)

- Handout#1,2 pictures
- Handout#3.4,5.6,7 worksheets
- Realia#1: a tape from the Major League Baseball Game
- Realia#2: video segment from the Major League Baseball Game
- Realia#3: Mariners Magazine (the Official Seattle Mariners Magazine)

4. Procedure

(1) In-lead Activity: **(Activate Background Knowledge)**

a. Get SS to make pairs according to seat arrangement. **(Cooperate)**

b. Get SS to listen to the tape from the Major Leagues Baseball Game (25seconds): Realia#1 **(Auditory)**

c. Get SS to guess what sport they are playing and ask the answer orally. **(Predict)(Verify Predictions and Guesses)**

d. Show SS a video segment of the Major Leagues. (15 seconds): Realia#2 **(Visual)**

e. Explain to SS that we are going to read a story about one of the famous players in the Major Leagues. :Realia#3

f. Get SS to pass an official Major League Baseball magazine around. **(Manipulate/Act Out)**

(2) Pre- reading Activity: (Picture Walk-through) **(Predicting)(Visual)**

a. Distribute to SS pictures (handout#1,2)(see Appendix 1) and worksheets (handout#3,4)

b. Get SS to finish the worksheets (handout#3,4)(see Appendix 2) in pairs.

c. Ask SS answers and give brief feedback. **(Auditory)**

Answers are as follows:

Birth → 6 years old (handout#3)

1. No.
2. Grandparents

3. In the street

4. Police officers

5. He had a lonely, hard childhood.

6 years old (handout#4) →

Answer:

2. After young George Herman Ruth is sent away to a school for boys, he learns to play baseball. There, a caring teacher helps him go on to become one of the most famous players in baseball history.

Major League Baseball (handout#4)

1. *Example:* I will hit home run. etc.

2. *Example:* They are playing in the Ninth inning.

3. *Example:* The score is seven to seven.

(3) During- reading Task: (Comprehension Questions) **(Selectively Attend)**

① Get SS to read the story and to finish handout#5 in pairs. (see Appendix 6)

② Ask SS answers and give brief feedback.

Answers: 1.*When:* 1932, October 1st *Inning:* The fifth inning, *Score:* 4 –4

2. Pitcher

3. /they were booing and throwing things at him from the stands.

/they were yelling insults at him.

4. *(The crowd)* was roaring for Root to strike out the Yankee slugger.

(The players) were screaming at him from the Cubs' bench.

(Babe Ruth) glared at them, then turned and faced the pitcher.

5. *(The ball)* 1 flew high over the center-field fence.

2 was right where he had pointed.

3 was also the longest hit in the history of Chicago's Wrigley Field.

(The Yankees) went on to win the game, and the 1932 World Series.

(4) After-reading Task:

a. Get SS to retell the story to a partner, using handout#5. **(Summarize)(Cooperate)**

b. Get SS to write down irregular verbs on the chart. (handout #6) (see Appendix 5)

c. **(Take Notes)**

(Show examples: gave, told, etc.)

c. Ask SS answers orally and write them on the board.

d. Get SS to write down the past progressive tense on the chart. (handout #6)

(Show examples: were doing, was singing, etc.) **(Take Notes)**

e. Ask SS answers orally and write them on the board. **(Auditory/Visual)**

f. Ask the following question orally **(Auditory)**

Question: Why do they use the past progressive tense in the story instead of the past tense?

Answer: Because the game was continuing.

g. Get SS to write at least sentences using these forms (*the irregular verbs, the past progressive)* **(Transfer/Cognate)**

Example: I went to Osaka to eat *Takoyaki* (grilled octopus dumplings) last Sunday with my friends. After eating *Takoyaki*, we were hanging around the city.

(5) Follow-up Activity: **(Active Experimentation)**

a. Get SS to go to the three web sites related to the Major Leagues in a computer lab and to answer the questions on the handout#7 (see Appendix 5)

b. Get SS to make groups of 4 according to the seat arrangement.

c. Get SS to choose a discussion leader, reporter, writer, and a timekeeper.

d. Get SS to choose the most interesting topic and each group will report back to the class.

(Continues)

D. Using L1 and L2 in Instruction

This section points out the significance of the choice of the instructional language and suggests that using relatively much Japanese at first for underachieving students in the Japanese high school EFL context. First, because of the limited vocabulary words in English, not surprisingly, it's very difficult for students to understand what teachers say in English in class. In avoiding this situation, teachers should

speak in English in the classroom in a limited manner, such as "Good morning/afternoon", "In the last period, we looked at..." and so on. Then, teachers can increase the amount of speaking English according to the proficiency of the students. Second, "In mixed level classes", as explained by Schmidt (1995), "lower level students can easily be left behind. If only the L2 is allowed, they may frequently miss out on explanations and instructions and can become discouraged" (p.26). Although TBL includes communicative tasks in English, the use of L1 should be allowed to a certain amount; however, the use of the L1 should be lessened gradually. "In English speaking countries and the general European community", as described by Brown and Yamashita (in Schmidt, 1995), "translation is seen as a special skill taught for professional purposes to those who have achieved high levels of competence in both the L1and L2" (p.27). Furthermore, Bamford (in Schmidt, 1995) asserts that it negatively affects improvement in reading and speaking fluency by allowing students to rely on translation too much. In short, teachers should bear this in mind, and by balancing the use of the L1 and L2, will motivate unsuccessful learners because the use of L2 is strongly related to learners' anxiety (see Chapter II .B).

IV. Conclusion

As seen in the previous chapters, several motivational strategies and approaches were illuminated here in this paper. To conclude, the crucial means in terms of motivation of unsuccessful learners in the Japanese EFL context are to employ several motivational strategies mentioned in sections II .B to II .G, and to incorporate these into communicative activities such as those in TBL. Also, considering students learning styles would offer greater help in motivating unsuccessful learners in the Japanese high school EFL context.

However, keep in mind that all strategies do not always apply to all students because every student is different and has different characteristics. In addition, the environment students are placed in is also different. McCombs and Pope (in Dörnyei, 2001) assert that beginning to try two or three strategies first with several students will work. In other words, taking students' particular conditions, such as the proficiency level, interests, and school profiles into account would work better.

Personally speaking, last year (in 2002) our high school baseball team participated in a nationwide

tournament in summer for the first time, and later in that year we had far more students who had passed competitive university exams than usual. In other words, the first success influenced the motivation of college bound students and bred the next academic success. Besides, I heard that the atmosphere of the school was very nice at that time. This would be an example of the motivational effect. It is not easy to define what led the victory of our school baseball team; however, one reason would be teachers' enthusiasm. As mentioned earlier, teachers' enthusiasm might have affected students. Although I was studying at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. at that time, the event actually motivated me and made me more confident.

Finally, I have strong hope that appropriate motivational strategies will encourage unsuccessful learners and enhance their proficiency in practical communicative English as an international language.

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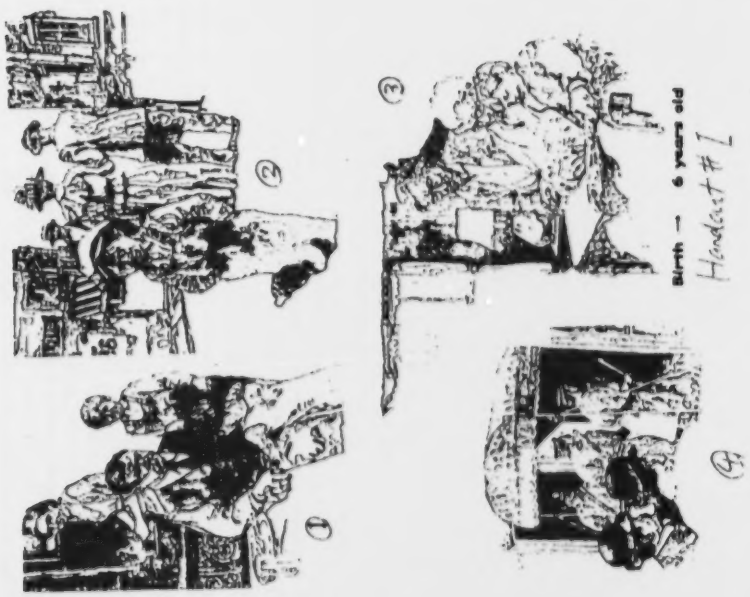
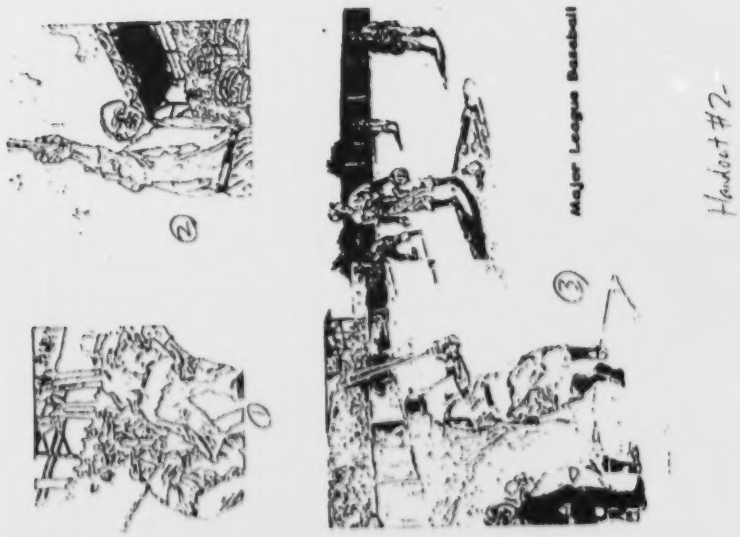
APPENDIX 1

#1



#2



(from *"Babe Ruth"- HOMR RUN HERO-* by Keith Brandt illustrated by Hal Frenck (Troll Associates)

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APENDIX 2

#3 Your Name ( )

Partners' Name ( )

Pre-reading Activity

Birth → 6 years old

1. Does the boy look happy? (picture 1)
2. Where do you think the boy is? (picture2)
3. Who do you think the boy is with? (picture3)
4. Who do you think the three men going into the building are?

   (picture4)
5. Guess what kind of childhood he has?

#4

6 years →

Guess what kind of life he will have and choose one correct statements below.(Circle the number next to the statement)

1. After young George Herman Ruth goes to a local elementary school, he learns to play baseball. As he has a gifted talent about baseball, he has become one of the most famous players in baseball history.
2. After young George Herman Ruth is sent away to a school for boys, he learns to play baseball. There, a caring teacher helps him go on to become one of the most famous players in baseball history.
3. After young George Herman Ruth graduated from a local elementary school, he starts to work in a restaurant. Then, he learns to play baseball in an amateur baseball team. A few years later, he becomes one of the most famous players in baseball history.

Major League Baseball

1. Guess what Babe Ruth is trying to say.
2. Guess what inning they are playing.
3. Guess what the score of the game is.

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APENDIX 3

#5 Your Name( )

During-reading Task

1. The Game (Baseball World Series)

When :(Year)

(Date)

Teams: the New York Yankees VS. the Chicago Cubs

(Inning)

(Score)

2. Babe Ruth VS Charlie Root

Hitter &

3. Babe Ruth was angry at

:the Chicago fans because

:the Chicago players because

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APPENDIX 4

#6

4. How was

the crowd?

the players?

Babe Ruth?

5. Results:

The ball:

①
②
③

The Yankees:

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APPENDIX 5

#7 A Chart of Verbs

IRREGULAR VERBS:

The PAST PROGRESSIVE (CONTINUOUS):

Write at least 3 sentences using these forms above.

Example: I *went* to Osaka to eat Takoyaki (grilled octopus dumplings) last Sunday. After eating Takoyaki, I *was hanging* around the city. I *came* home at 8:00p.m.

#8 Your Name ( )

Go to the following websites and answer the questions below.

A www.yankees.com
B www.mariners.mlb.com
C www.BabeRuthMuseum.com

A. Why are the Yankees such a great team?

B. How was the 2001 season of the Mariners?

C. What can you find in the Babe Ruth museum?

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